



# For God's Children INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 434, Council Bluffs, IA 51502-0434 | [www.fgci.org](http://www.fgci.org)

## ***A Personal Note*** (without pictures!)

*from Joel A. Burkum*  
FGCI Executive Director

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*"...if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood" (Ezekiel 33:6/NIV).*

Dear Friends,

First of all, I want to thank all of you faithful supporters who uphold us regularly in prayer, and who send monthly financial contributions without any prompting. This is truly amazing to me (and very encouraging, too!)—especially during these hectic spring and summer months. Be assured: you are appreciated and regularly prayed for by me and the staff of FGCI. How I humbly and thankfully praise God for you.

I am getting ready to leave for Romania tomorrow afternoon, but really wanted (needed!) to write you a *Personal Note* ministry update before heading out, as it's been months since I've updated you. [I'm sorry I haven't included any photos with this *Personal Note*. Just no time right now. I hope you'll still take time to read it. :) ]

We have had QUITE a 2018 thus far. And, we have much to look forward to as 2018 continues. I want to give you a brief synopsis of several of the major projects and events that have taken place this year. As I report these "ministry activities" to you, I want to remind you that we're in this ministry with ONE PRIORITY: to lead those we serve to eternal life with Christ. We believe that we are called to be watchmen (see Ezekiel 33:6,7) for the kids and adults we serve; warning and encouraging them about their need of the Savior Jesus Christ. We take Jesus' commission to "go make disciples" very seriously. All of the accoutrements of ministry pale in comparison to the foundation of our work which is to convey the hope of Christ to the lost.

In March, we took a team to Romania to do our renovation of three rooms at the Zebil center for mentally- and physically-challenged adults, a place we've worked for many years. After a year of unsuccessfully attempting to find and secure a Romanian contractor to do the renovation of a shower room and toilet room, we made the decision to send a bunch of us over there to do the renovation ourselves. What a terrific crew we had! We worked sunup till sundown for two weeks solid, demolishing, re-plumbing, re-wiring and renovating the women's shower and toilet room. We also renovated our new InSNC (Individual Specialized Needs Care) therapy room across the hall from the toilets and showers. We figure that, with the help of several of the residents at the center who toiled right along with us all day, we removed more than 5 and 1/2 tons of concrete, brick and tile out of the rooms. Praise the Lord! We completed the project and are now happy to see new showers, sinks and toilets all in place and working—and ALL on the same level. No more dangerous steps to climb. No more uneven places to trip. Our "Sunshine (Occupational and Physical Therapy) Room" is now being used daily for one-on-one learning and life-skills activities, led by Sheena Davidson and our two Romanian workers, Doina and Mihaela. I look forward to joining the ladies in a week or two, as we continue to develop our program, discuss policy and demonstrate care techniques to the Zebil workers. In the upcoming months and years, Lord permitting, we hope to take over lots of professional occupational and physical therapists from the States to train Romanian workers to do OT and PT work with the folks at the Zebil center. Praise God for this wonderful opportunity. And, praise God for the favor He has allowed us to have with Romanian government officials and the staff members of the center where we're working. Pray for me and Nootsie Ristea (our FGCI-Romania president) as we speak with Child Protection officials in August, regarding our InSNC program.

*more >>>*

In April and May we were very busy preparing for the **Camp of the Risen Son/Camp of the Good Shepherd Jubilee 50 Celebration** event at our Camp of the Good Shepherd. The camp facilities we now own and manage (since 2006) was first built as a Nike-Hercules missile control base (actual missiles on a berm 1 mile to our west) back in 1959-60. In 1968, the decommissioned base was purchased for \$38,000 by a loosely-knit group of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in the Council Bluffs/Omaha/Lincoln area for use as a Christian Service camp for youth and families. The first Bible camps were held at the renovated facility in 1969, under the name of Camp of the Risen Son. So, we are now in the 50th year of using the base as a place for Bible camp ministry (now under the name of Camp of the Good Shepherd). We had a wonderful celebration on May 19th, with several of the original folks who were involved with the purchase, renovation and development of the Bible camp program in attendance, among them: Duane King, Bob Chitwood, Gail Portenier and Kathy (Hall) Asboe. More than 200 people were at camp for the celebration which included a praise service, a family bike ride, a carnival and an outdoor BBQ. Praise God for this beautiful and well-equipped place for leading children and adults to a closer walk with God, while at the same time "having fun learning about Jesus!"...our camp motto. We plan to hold a few more **CRS/CGS Jubilee 50 Celebration** homecoming events prior to our camp season next spring (2019). Keep your eyes and ears open for a reunion or event announcement.

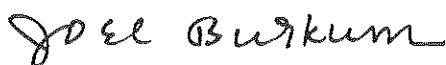
June is the month when we start sending teams to Romania, and when we have a full schedule of Bible camps in Romania and here in the States. Wow! What an action-packed June it was! This summer, we have had at least 5 groups of kids and workers in our ministry home in Babadag (under the direction of our staff members, Eli and Sheena Davidson, and Nootsie Ristea doing Bible camps. This means that somewhere between 25 and 35 children and adults at a time are together in our Lida House doing a Bible camp program for 5 or 6 full days. It is SO MUCH FUN and WORK to pull off these camps for kids from centers or poor families in the Babadag area. [We are thankful for our new second level (which I call the "upper room") on the Lida House which makes sleeping 30+ people each night, much more comfortable!] As I write, FGCI Associate Director Jeremy Befort and Nootsie Ristea are leading day camps in Zizin and Purcareni, Romania (up in the Carpathian mountains), for Roma/Gypsy and Hungarian children. Soon, I'll be joining Jeremy and Nootsie (and our summer interns and missions team members) to lead camps for Roma/Gypsy children and adults in Moldova. Praise God for these annual opportunities we have to plant the seeds of God's Word in the hearts and minds of children in Romania and Moldova. Pray for the children, because their normal daily surroundings are the source of much anxiety, sorrow and hopelessness. Bible camp offers these kids a taste of the "good things" of God.

I don't have space or time to write much about our overall ministry in Moldova, but want you to know that our new family of foster parents (Vlad and Carolina Pogor) and 6 foster kids is doing GREAT at the Home of the Good Shepherd. Also, our full-time Moldovan staff member and liaison, Daniela Ceri, is doing a marvelous job coordinating our ministry with our foster family and with Roma/Gypsy children. Soon, we will be joining Vlad, Carolina and Daniela to lead a VBS and two Bible camps for our children in Nisporeni and Vulcanesti, Moldova.

Here in the States at our Camp of the Good Shepherd (CGS), we just finished up the second of two Lakota Kids Bible Camps. We are thankful for the Ames, IA team from North Grand Christian Church, and for the Valley Christian Church team from Lakeville, MN for leading these camps for Lakota children from the Rosebud Indian Reservation of South Dakota. In June and July we hosted 6 graded Bible camps for children at CGS. Numbers and spirits were good! It was my 12th consecutive year to dean the Junior Camp (kids entering 5th and 6th grade) session. [I love my Junior Camp kids!] It was a fantastic camp! Our theme for camp this summer has been: *The Great GO Mission* (based on Jesus' Great Commission in Matt. 28:18-20). Our goal: GO MAKE DISCIPLES! And we saw this mission being carried out! At all of our graded Bible camps we saw many young people make decisions to become disciples of Christ. We had 5 baptisms at Junior Camp, 3 at Junior High Camp and 3 at High School Camp. Praise God! It's been good having our new CGS Programs Director, Brian Montieth, with us through the whole camp season this year. He's been learning the ropes of managing our camp programs. Now, he's looking forward to developing even more sessions of Bible camps and seminars, and seeking more groups to use our CGS facilities for their own events and programs. We are excited to have Brian with us as we develop our Camp of the Good Shepherd program and facilities.

I've already gone on longer than I planned with this ministry update, so I'll close. Please keep us in prayer as we continue to serve as "watchmen" for our kids on so many fronts. There is a battle going on for their souls. We thank you for helping us reach out with the Good News of Christ and as we serve as the hands and feet of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We couldn't do what we do without you. Thanks for your faithful support.

Love in Jesus,



brother joel burkum